



SENATE BILL 51  
Criminal Procedure - Reasonable Suspicion and Probable Cause - Cannabis

February 8, 2023  
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

Dear Chairperson Smith, Vice Chairperson Waldstreicher and Honorable Members of the Committee:

The Choice Program at UMBC supports Senate **Bill 51** introduced by Senator Jill Carter. We urge the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

The Choice Program at UMBC has served Maryland youth who are systems-involved for nearly 35 years. Presently, Choice works with young people and their families in Baltimore City as well as Baltimore, Howard, Prince George's, and Montgomery Counties. Young people often remind us that their past trauma—and worst mistakes—should not define them. Choice serves as an alternative to the school-to-prison pipeline; our primary goal is to reduce the number of Black and Latinx young people who are entangled in the youth legal system. Our model seeks to dismantle racist structures and, instead, employs strengths-based approaches focused on positive relationships and their agency. We hold high expectations for youth and parents as well as high levels of support. These guiding principles are essential in addressing racial inequities at an individual and systemic level.

Maryland's legal system disproportionately ensnares Black and Latinx young people, limiting their life chances in education, vocation, civic engagement, and health and wellbeing. A punitive criminal justice system does not offer young people developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive interventions; it exacerbates stubborn inequities. And, it does not keep Marylanders safer. This session offers the chance to remake our youth legal system to reduce racial and ethnic disparities especially for children and young adults.

We are concerned that the odor of a soon-to-be legal substance should not be used as a pretext for the search of a person or their vehicle. After a stop or vehicle search, it is impossible for officers to prove that they did, in fact, smell marijuana. As such, law enforcement has been given a blank check to conduct spurious searches. Odor search claims are not only highly used, but highly abused. Odor searches facilitate racial profiling. Odor Searches permit needless escalations during routine traffic enforcement and puts youth at risk.

The Choice Program at UMBC respectfully urges this committee to issue a favorable report on SB 51.